

Chapter 4

APPLICATIONS, WAITING LIST AND TENANT SELECTION

INTRODUCTION

When a family wishes to receive assistance under the HCV (Housing Choice Voucher) program, the family must submit an application that provides the PHA (Public Housing Authority) with the information needed to determine the family's eligibility. HUD (U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development) requires the PHA to place all families that apply for assistance on a waiting list. When HCV assistance becomes available, the PHA must select families from the waiting list in accordance with HUD requirements and PHA policies as stated in the administrative plan and the annual plan.

The PHA is required to adopt clear policies and procedures for accepting applications, placing families on the waiting list, and selecting families from the waiting list, and must follow these policies and procedures consistently. The actual order in which families are selected from the waiting list can be affected if a family has certain characteristics designated by HUD or the PHA that justify their selection. Examples of this are the selection of families for income targeting and the selection of families that qualify for targeted funding.

HUD regulations require that all families have an equal opportunity to apply for and receive housing assistance, and that the PHA affirmatively further fair housing goals in the administration of the program [24 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 982.53, HCV GB p. 4-1]. Adherence to the selection policies described in this chapter ensures that the PHA will comply with all relevant fair housing requirements, as described in Chapter 2.

This chapter describes HUD and PHA policies for taking applications, managing the waiting list, and selecting families for HCV assistance. The policies outlined in this chapter are organized into three sections, as follows:

Part I: The Application Process. This part provides an overview of the application process and discusses how applicants can obtain and submit applications. It also specifies how the PHA will handle the applications it receives.

Part II: Managing the Waiting List. This part presents the policies that govern how the PHA's waiting list is structured, when it is opened and closed, and how the public is notified of the opportunity to apply for assistance. It also discusses the process the PHA will use to keep the waiting list current.

Part III: Selection for HCV Assistance. This part describes the policies that guide the PHA in selecting families for HCV assistance as such assistance becomes available. It also specifies how in-person interviews will be used to ensure that the PHA has the information needed to make a final eligibility determination.

PART I: THE APPLICATION PROCESS

4-I.A. OVERVIEW

This part describes the PHA policies for making applications available, accepting applications making preliminary determinations of eligibility, and the placement of applicants on the waiting list. This part also describes the PHA's obligation to ensure the accessibility of the application process to elderly persons, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

4-I.B. APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE [HCV GB, pp. 4-11 – 4-16, Notice PIH (Public and Indian Housing) 2009-36]

Any family that wishes to receive HCV assistance must apply for admission to the program. HUD permits the PHA to determine the format and content of HCV applications, how such applications will be available to interested families and how they will be accepted by the PHA. The PHA must include Form HUD-92006, Supplement to Application for Federally Assisted Housing, as part of the PHA's application.

Depending upon the length of time that applicants may need to wait to receive assistance, the PHA may use a one- or two-step application process.

A one-step process will be used when a family will be selected from the waiting list within 60 days of the application date. At application, the family must provide all the information necessary to establish family eligibility and assistance level.

A two-step process will be used when a family will not be selected from the waiting list for at least 60 days from the date of application. Under the two-step application process, the PHA will require families to provide only the information needed to assess the family's eligibility and determine their placement on the waiting list. The family will be required to provide all information necessary to establish family eligibility and level of assistance when the family is selected from the waiting list.

Families may apply electronically through the applicant portal listed on the PHA's website. Families without computer access may call the PHA to request assistance in applying electronically.

Applications submitted through the PHA online applicant portal must be complete to be accepted by the PHA for processing and must contain an email address. If an application is incomplete, the PHA will notify the family of the additional information required by email.

4-I.C. ACCESSIBILITY OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Elderly and Disabled Populations [24 CFR 8 and HCV GB, pp. 4-11 – 4-13]

The PHA must take steps to ensure that the application process is accessible to those people who might have difficulty complying with the normal, standard PHA application process. This could include people with disabilities, certain elderly individuals, as well as persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). The PHA must provide reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities. The application-taking facility and the application process must be fully

accessible, or the PHA must provide an alternate approach that provides full access to the application process. Chapter 2 provides a full discussion of the PHA's policies related to providing reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

Limited English Proficiency

PHAs are required to take reasonable steps to ensure equal access to their programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency [24 CFR 1]. Chapter 2 provides a full discussion on the PHA's policies related to ensuring access to people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

4-I.D. PLACEMENT ON THE WAITING LIST

The PHA must review each complete application received and make a preliminary assessment of the family's eligibility. The PHA must accept applications from families for whom the list is open unless there is good cause for not accepting the application (such as denial of assistance) for the grounds stated in the regulations [24 CFR 982.206(b)(2)]. Where the family is determined to be ineligible, the PHA must notify the family in writing [24 CFR 982.201(f)]. Where the family is not determined to be ineligible, the family will be placed on a waiting list of applicants.

No applicant has a right or entitlement to be listed on the waiting list, or to any position on the waiting list [24 CFR 982.202(c)].

Ineligible for Placement on the Waiting List

If the PHA can determine from the information provided that a family is ineligible, the family will not be placed on the waiting list. Where a family is determined to be ineligible, the PHA will send written notification of the ineligibility determination. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility and will inform the family of its right to request an informal review and explain the process for doing so (see Chapter 16).

Eligible for Placement on the Waiting List

For paper applications, the PHA will send written notification of the preliminary eligibility determination within 30 business days of receiving a complete application. Online applications through the applicant portal will generate a confirmation code to the applicant's email address as provided.

Placement on the waiting list does not indicate that the family is, in fact, eligible for assistance. A final determination of eligibility will be made when the family is selected from the waiting list.

Applicants will be placed on the waiting list according to any preference(s) for which they qualify, and the date and time their complete application is received by the PHA.

PART II: MANAGING THE WAITING LIST

4-II.A. OVERVIEW

The PHA must have policies regarding various aspects of organizing and managing the waiting list of applicant families. This includes opening the list to new applicants, closing the list to new applicants, notifying the public of waiting list openings and closings, updating waiting list information, purging the list of families that are no longer interested in or eligible for assistance, as well as conducting outreach to ensure a sufficient number of applicants.

In addition, HUD imposes requirements on how a PHA may structure its waiting list and how families must be treated if they apply for assistance from a PHA that administers more than one assisted housing program.

4-II.B. ORGANIZATION OF THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204 and 205]

The PHA's HCV waiting list must be organized to allow the PHA to identify and select families for assistance in the proper order, according to the admissions policies described in this plan.

The waiting list must contain the following information for each applicant listed:

- Applicant name;
- Family unit size;
- Date and time of application;
- Qualification for any local preference;
- Racial or ethnic designation of the head of household.

The PHA online applicant portal requires an email address and a phone number.

HUD requires the PHA to maintain a single waiting list for the HCV program unless it serves more than one county or municipality. Such PHAs are permitted, but not required, to maintain a separate waiting list for each county or municipality served.

The PHA will maintain a single waiting list for the HCV program.

HUD directs that a family that applies for assistance from the HCV program must be offered the opportunity to be placed on the waiting list for any public housing, project-based voucher, or moderate rehabilitation program the PHA operates if 1) the other programs' waiting lists are open, and 2) the family is qualified for the other programs.

HUD permits, but does not require, that PHAs maintain a single merged waiting list for their public housing, Section 8, and other subsidized housing programs.

A family's decision to apply for, receive, or refuse other housing assistance must not affect the family's placement on the HCV waiting list, or any preferences for which the family may qualify.

The PHA will not merge the HCV waiting list with the waiting list for any other program the PHA operates.

4-II.C. OPENING AND CLOSING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.206]

Closing the Waiting List

A PHA can close the waiting list if it has an adequate pool of families to use its available HCV assistance. Alternatively, the PHA may continue to accept applications only from certain categories of families that meet preferences or funding criteria.

The PHA will close the waiting list when the estimated waiting period for housing assistance for applicants on the list reaches 24 months for the most current applicants. Where the PHA has preferences or funding criteria that require a specific family category, the PHA may continue to accept applications from these applicants while closing the waiting list to others.

Reopening the Waiting List

If the waiting list has been closed, it cannot be reopened until the PHA publishes a notice in local newspapers of general circulation, minority media, and other suitable media outlets. The notice must comply with HUD fair housing requirements and must specify who may apply, and where and when applications will be received.

The PHA will announce the reopening of the waiting list at least 10 business days prior to the date applications will first be accepted. If the list is only being reopened for certain categories of families, this information will be contained in the notice.

The PHA will give public notice by publishing the relevant information in suitable media outlets including, but not limited to:

Madison Eagle Newspaper, Madison Monthly Newspaper, Madison Housing Authority Website, Borough of Madison Website, Borough Hall.

4-II.D. FAMILY OUTREACH [HCV GB, pp. 4-2 to 4-4]

The PHA must conduct outreach as necessary to ensure that the PHA has a sufficient number of applicants on the waiting list to use the HCV resources it has been allotted.

Because HUD requires the PHA to admit a specified percentage of extremely low-income families to the program (see Chapter 4, Part III), the PHA may need to conduct special outreach to ensure that an adequate number of such families apply for assistance [HCV GB, p. 4-20 to 4-21].

PHA outreach efforts must comply with fair housing requirements. This includes:

- Analyzing the housing market area and the populations currently being served to identify underserved populations
- Ensuring that outreach efforts are targeted to media outlets that reach eligible populations that are underrepresented in the program
- Avoiding outreach efforts that prefer or exclude people who are members of a protected class

PHA outreach efforts must be designed to inform qualified families about the availability of assistance under the program. These efforts may include, as needed, any of the following activities:

- Submitting press releases to local newspapers, including minority newspapers
- Developing informational materials and flyers to distribute to other agencies
- Providing application forms to other public and private agencies that serve the low-income population
- Developing partnerships with other organizations that serve similar populations, including agencies that provide services for persons with disabilities

The PHA will monitor the characteristics of the population being served and the characteristics of the population in the PHA's jurisdiction. Targeted outreach efforts will be undertaken if a comparison suggests that certain populations are being underserved.

4-II.E. REPORTING CHANGES IN FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES

While the family is on the waiting list, the family must immediately inform the PHA of changes in contact information, including current residence, mailing address, and phone number. The changes must be submitted in writing.

4-II.F. UPDATING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204]

HUD requires the PHA to establish policies to use when removing applicant names from the waiting list.

Purging the Waiting List

The decision to withdraw an applicant family that includes a person with disabilities from the waiting list is subject to reasonable accommodation. If the applicant did not respond to a PHA request for information or updates, and the PHA determines that the family did not respond because of the family member's disability, the PHA must reinstate the applicant family to their former position on the waiting list [24 CFR 982.204(c)(2)].

The waiting list will be updated as needed to ensure that all applicants and applicant information is current and timely.

To update the waiting list, the PHA will send an update request via email to each family on the waiting list to determine whether the family continues to be interested in, and to qualify for, the program. This update request will be sent to the email that the PHA has on record for the family. The update request will provide a deadline by which the family must respond, instructions on how to respond through the applicant portal, and will state that failure to respond will result in the applicant's name being removed from the waiting list.

Applicants must provide their updated information through the PHA's online applicant portal no later than 15 business days from the deadline established in the PHA purge notice. Applicant families without computer access may contact the PHA for assistance with updating their application on the applicant portal.

If the family fails to respond within 30 business days, the family will be removed from the waiting list without further notice.

If a family is removed from the waiting list for failure to respond, the PHA may reinstate the family if it is determined that the lack of response was due to PHA error, or to circumstances beyond the family's control, as a result of a family member's disability, or as a direct result of status as a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, including an adverse factor resulting from such abuse.

Removal from the Waiting List

If the PHA determines that an applicant family on the waiting list is ineligible for assistance, (see Chapter 3), the PHA will remove the family from the wait list.

If a family is removed from the waiting list because the PHA has determined they are not eligible for assistance, a notice will be sent to the family's address of record. The notice will state the reasons the family was removed from the waiting list and will inform the family how to request an informal review regarding the PHA's decision (see Chapter 16) [24 CFR 982.201(f)].

PART III: SELECTION FOR HCV ASSISTANCE

4-III.A. OVERVIEW

As vouchers become available, families on the waiting list must be selected for assistance in accordance with the policies described in this part.

The order in which families are selected from the waiting list depends on the selection method chosen by the PHA and is impacted in part by any selection preferences for which the family qualifies. The availability of targeted funding also may affect the order in which families are selected from the waiting list.

The PHA must maintain a clear record of all information required to verify that the family is selected from the waiting list according to the PHA's selection policies [24 CFR 982.204(b) and 982.207(e)].

4-III.B. SELECTION AND HCV FUNDING SOURCES

Special Admissions [24 CFR 982.203]

HUD may award funding for specifically named families living in specified types of units (e.g., a family that is displaced by demolition of public housing; a non-purchasing family residing in a HOPE 1 or 2 projects). In these cases, the PHA may admit such families whether they are on the waiting list, and, if they are on the waiting list, without considering the family's position on the waiting list. These families are considered non-waiting list selections. The PHA must maintain records showing that such families were admitted with special program funding.

Targeted Funding [24 CFR 982.204(e)]

HUD may award a PHA funding for a specified category of families on the waiting list. The PHA must use this funding only to assist the families within the specified category. To assist families within a targeted funding category, the PHA may skip families that do not qualify within the targeted funding category. Within this category of families, the order in which such families are assisted is determined according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

The PHA administers the following types of targeted funding: None.

Regular HCV Funding

Regular HCV funding may be used to assist any eligible family on the waiting list. Families are selected from the waiting list according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

4-III.C. SELECTION METHOD

PHAs must describe the method for selecting applicant families from the waiting list, including the system of admission preferences that the PHA will use [24 CFR 982.202(d)].

Local Preferences [24 CFR 982.207; HCV p. 4-16]

PHAs can establish local preferences and prioritize serving families that meet those criteria. HUD specifically authorizes and places restrictions on certain types of local preferences. HUD also permits the PHA to establish other local preferences, at its discretion. Any local preferences established must be consistent with the PHA plan and the consolidated plan and must be based on local housing needs and priorities that can be documented by generally accepted data sources.

The PHA will use the following local preferences with the hierarchy of preference being from preference #1 (most weighted) to preference #3 (least weighted):

- 1. Residency preference: Families who live or have verifiable employment in the Borough of Madison***
- 2. Working preference: Families with at least one adult employed at least 30 hours per week. This preference is extended equally to families whose head-of-household is 62 years of age or older or is disabled and receiving income based on their inability to work.***
- 3. Lease-in-place preference: Families living in the Borough of Madison who wish to utilize a housing choice voucher in the unit in which they currently reside.***

Income Targeting Requirement [24 CFR 982.201(b)(2)]

HUD requires that extremely low-income (ELI) families make up at least 75 percent of the families admitted to the HCV program during the PHA's fiscal year. ELI families are those with annual incomes at or below the federal poverty level or 30 percent of the area median income, whichever number is higher. To ensure this requirement is met, a PHA may skip non-ELI families on the waiting list to select an ELI family.

Low-income families admitted to the program that are "continuously assisted" under the 1937 Housing Act [24 CFR 982.4(b)], as well as low-income or moderate-income families admitted to the program that are displaced as a result of the prepayment of the mortgage or voluntary termination of an insurance contract on eligible low-income housing, are not counted for income targeting purposes [24 CFR 982.201(b)(2)(v)].

The PHA will monitor progress in meeting the income targeting requirement throughout the fiscal year. Extremely low-income families will be selected ahead of other eligible families on an as-needed basis to ensure the income targeting requirement is met. HUD may approve exceptions to this requirement if the PHA demonstrates that it has made all required efforts but has been unable to attract enough qualified extremely low-income families.

Order of Selection

The PHA system of preferences may select families based on local preferences according to the date and time of application or by a random selection process (lottery) [24 CFR 982.207(c)]. If a PHA does not have enough funding to assist the family at the top of the waiting list, it is not permitted to skip down the waiting list to a family that it can afford to subsidize when there are not sufficient funds to subsidize the family at the top of the waiting list [24 CFR 982.204(d) and (e)].

HCV Families will be selected from the waiting list based on the local preferences for which they qualify, and in accordance with the PHA's hierarchy of preferences. Within each preference category, families will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis according to the date and time their complete application is received by the PHA. (See Chapter 18 for RAD PBV tenant selection system.)

4-III.D. NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION

When a family has been selected from the waiting list, the PHA must notify the family [24 CFR 982.554(a)].

The PHA will notify the family by email or first class mail when it is selected from the waiting list. The notice will inform the family of the following:

Date, time, and location of the scheduled application interview, including any procedures for rescheduling the interview

Who is required to attend the interview

All documents that must be provided at the interview, including information about what constitutes acceptable documentation

If a notification letter is returned to the PHA with no forwarding address, or an email address provided by the family is invalid, the family will be removed from the waiting list.

4-III.E. THE APPLICATION INTERVIEW

HUD recommends that the PHA obtain the information and documentation needed to make an eligibility determination through a face-to-face interview with a PHA representative [HCV GB, pg. 4-16]. Being invited to attend an interview does not constitute admission to the program.

Assistance cannot be provided to the family until all SSN (Social Security Numbers) documentation requirements are met. However, if the PHA determines that an applicant family is otherwise eligible to participate in the program, the family may retain its place on the waiting list for a period of time determined by the PHA [Notice PIH 2018-24].

Reasonable accommodation must be made for persons with disabilities unable to attend an interview due to their disability.

Families selected from the waiting list are required to participate in an eligibility interview.

All adult family members must attend the eligibility interview and are strongly encouraged to attend the interview together to avoid delays in the eligibility determination process. Verification of information pertaining to adult members of the household absent at the eligibility interview will not begin until signed release forms are returned to the PHA.

The head of household or spouse/cohead must provide acceptable documentation of legal identity. Chapter 7 discusses proper documentation of legal identity. If the family representative does not provide the required documentation at the time of the interview, they must provide it within 10 business days.

Pending disclosure and documentation of social security numbers, the PHA will allow the family to retain its place on the waiting list for 30 days. If all household members have not disclosed their SSNs within 30 days of the eligibility interview, the PHA will move on to the next eligible applicant family on the waiting list.

The family must provide the information necessary to establish the family's eligibility and determine the appropriate level of assistance, and must complete required forms, provide required signatures, and submit required documentation. If any materials are missing, the PHA will provide the family with a written list of items that must be submitted.

Any required documents or information that the family is unable to provide at the interview must be provided within 10 business days of the interview (Chapter 7 provides details about longer submission deadlines for certain items, including documentation of eligible noncitizen status). If the family is unable to obtain the information or materials within the required timeframe, the family may request an extension. If the required documents and information are not provided within the required timeframe (plus any extensions), the family will be sent a notice of denial (See Chapter 3).

An advocate, interpreter, or other assistant may assist the family with the application and the interview process.

Interviews will be conducted in English. For limited English proficient (LEP) applicants, the PHA will provide translation services in accordance with the PHA's LEP plan.

If the family cannot attend a scheduled interview, they should contact the PHA before the interview to reschedule the appointment. If a family does not attend a scheduled or rescheduled interview, the PHA will by email, phone or mail offering a new interview appointment time. Applicants who fail to attend two scheduled interviews without PHA approval will be denied assistance based on the family's failure to supply information needed to determine eligibility. A denial notice will be issued in accordance with policies in Chapter 3.

4-III.F. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The PHA must verify all information provided by the family (see Chapter 7). Based on verified information, the PHA must make a final determination of eligibility (see Chapter 3) and must confirm that the family qualified for any special admission, targeted funding admission, or selection preference that affected the order in which the family was selected from the waiting list.

If the PHA determines that the family is ineligible, the PHA will send written notification of the ineligibility determination within 10 business days of the determination. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility and will inform the family of its right to request an informal review (Chapter 16).

If a family fails to qualify for any criteria that affected the order in which it was selected from the waiting list (e.g., local preferences, extremely low-income targeting), the family will be returned to its original position on the waiting list. The PHA will notify the family in writing that it has been returned to the waiting list and will specify the reasons for it.

If the PHA determines that the family is eligible to receive assistance, the PHA will invite the family to attend a briefing in accordance with the policies in Chapter 5.